

File No. 9110223

WORLD TRADE CENTER TASK FORCE INTERVIEW

LIEUTENANT WARREN SMITH

Interview Date: December 4, 2001

Transcribed by Nancy Francis

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CHIEF MALKIN: Today's date is December 4th, 2001. The time is now 1523 hours. This is Battalion Chief Malkin of the Safety Battalion. I am conducting an interview with the following individual:

Lieutenant --

LIEUTENANT SMITH: Warren Smith.

CHIEF MALKIN: -- Warren Smith of Ladder Co. 9 regarding the events of September 11th, 2001. Also present in this room is Fireman Michael Bosco of the Safety Battalion.

Q. If you'll speak in a clear voice and regular tone since we'll record everything and just tell me what you remember.

A. Basically, we received the alarm to respond a little before 9:00, right around 9:00, actually, and just before that we actually heard the first plane hit. We heard it go over, of course, and then hit the building. One of the guys ran out. Guys were yelling what was that, a sonic boom? Guys went down to Lafayette. A couple of guys ran out. If you look down Lafayette, you can see the World Trade Center. You could see what happened. They came back. Shortly after that 33 responded. Shortly after that we responded.

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While we were on our way down Broadway, just about near the World Trade Center, there were reports that the other building was hit while we were responding and conflicting reports. You couldn't tell. The angle we were coming, we were heading south. The planes hit on the southwest corner, I believe. We were on basically the opposite corner. Then just before we got off the rig, I heard them transmit a fifth alarm, a second fifth alarm for the other building. I heard Hazmat on the radio say the building was hit. So at that point we did know it was hit. We still didn't realize whether or not -- you couldn't believe the first one, and when the second one hit, you obviously couldn't believe it even more, but you didn't really think that it was an attack at that point. It was just this is crazy.

So I parked the rig not directly in front of the building because I saw all the debris in the street. I told my chauffeur, I said, "Listen, there's a lot of stuff falling down." At that point I didn't know how much of that building was going to come down. Obviously not the whole thing. But we parked I believe at the cemetery and the church there. We parked over in that area. As it turned out later, it did save the

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rig from being crushed. We lost the rig because it burnt up. Some debris came down and flew over there and landed on it and lit it on fire. But it didn't get crushed.

Anyway, we had to walk a couple of blocks to the entrance on West Street. We walked in there, went into the lobby, saw the lobby command post, reported to the Chief. Chief Hayden was there. The Commissioner was there. I recognized a few other faces. But basically all the Chiefs were there at that point.

We stood fast for -- time is difficult to comprehend at this point. After the fact it was hard to put everything together, how long everything took, but generally it was probably about 30 seconds maybe that we stood fast before we got an order to go up the stairway. I believe it was stairway B. No specific orders or anything like that, just go up, see what you can do, basically. I think everybody was pretty much overwhelmed at that point because just shortly before that the other plane had hit, so you could see the confusion and everything else at the lobby command post.

So we went up. I talked to my guys while we were standing fast. On the way in I told them to look

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up. You could see the bodies were falling around us. I said, "Make sure don't get hit by a flying body when you look up," you know, "don't get hit," and none of us did. You could hear them landing.

We got into the lobby, stood fast for a short time. I paired the guys up. I said, "Listen, try to stay together. It may not be possible." But I paired everybody up. I tried to put seniority with less seniority and everything else.

Working our way up was slow going because we had civilians coming down. We were telling them to stay to their right, trying to calm them down, let them know they were out of harm's way, basically, and I'm sure all those people got out, unless they stood too near to either one of the buildings. For the most part I think all the civilians got out. A lot of civilians got out of the north tower. Working our way up was slow, again, because there were civilians, a lot of firefighters going up, catching up to engine companies with roll-ups, they're not moving as quickly. 33 actually responded a couple of minutes before we did and we ended up catching up to them. We got up to I guess about the 31st floor.

I also received reports while I was walking

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up from an FBI agent that there were more planes up in the air unaccounted for. So I passed this on to my guys that were near me. Radios were very difficult to use. But I passed it on to everybody and I had to pass it verbally, actually, that there were more planes up in the air unaccounted for, stay away from the windows.

At that point we knew. He told us, "Yeah, they're attacking us." That's when we really found out that we were being attacked, and this was probably somewhere in the vicinity of the 15th through 20th floor, whatever.

We got up to about the 31st floor, I believe it was the 31st floor, and met up with Engine 33. They were hearing reports on the radio, jet fuel on the upper floors, odor. I was trying to get ahold of some of my guys on the radio. I finally got ahold of a couple of guys that were on the 25th or 26th floor, heavyset guys who weren't making it up as fast as we were. There was me and a couple of younger guys, thinner guys. So I said, "All right, let's regroup here. Let's get everybody together."

While we were there, I saw a Chief down at the end of the hall. I was making my way down to talk

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to him to find out what we were going to do. There were a lot of guys on the 31st floor trying to figure out what was going on. Guys were resting. We were hearing a lot of reports on the radio from guys needing oxygen, firefighter down, just guys trying to go up too quickly. So as I was making my way to that Chief to find out what was going on, the other building went down. We did not know what it was. Because I had received reports from the FBI guy that there were other planes, I thought it was another plane hitting our building because it just shook like we were in an earthquake.

We were near a stairwell. The guys that were near the stairwell went up the stairwell. The building stopped shaking. The lights went out. The Chief was near me. I asked him, "What's going on?" He didn't have an answer just then, but shortly thereafter we got the order to evacuate. That was on the command channel, which I believe was 6. I heard them switch to channel 6.

We passed that order on to everybody that was with us on that floor. I know Ladder 8 was with us, Engine 5, some of their guys were in the vicinity, Engine 33. I don't know who the Chief was. Like I

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told guys afterwards, if you knew the guy who you saw in that building that day, if you knew him, you didn't work with him, you just knew who he was personally, you remembered him. But if you didn't, with all the shit going on, you just couldn't put the face and then later on see the name. They just didn't go together. There was just too much shit going on at once.

So we started making our way out. The evacuation was orderly. There was no panic. We didn't get a report that the other building went down, just to get out. I've worked in Manhattan my whole career in high-rises and everything else. I worked in midtown. When you get the order to evacuate a high-rise building, you know something's fucked up beyond what we can handle. Usually we just regroup on a lower floor, sometimes just a floor below. So my sense of urgency was pretty good to get the hell out of there. But there was no panic. Guys were calmly getting out.

In retrospect, would there have been panic if they would have told us the other building collapsed? It's hard to say really. I personally don't think so. I would have liked that information because -- I don't know. I mean, I made a lot of decisions that day and five out of eight of us got out. But if I had that



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information, would I have gotten all eight of us out? Again, it's really hard to say. I'm just glad five of us got out of there.

It was slow going on the way down. A lot of firemen we were picking up on the way down didn't know that the order to evacuate was given because I think, if you weren't near a Chief, from guys I talked to, you didn't get that order, at least not as quickly. I think it came over later. I didn't hear it myself. But the order to evacuate was given on channel 6, and channel 1 just may have been so bogged down that it may have been impossible to get that order through. I'm sure they tried. It was very slow going. Just doing the math, it was probably a minute per floor, because I know it took us about a half an hour to go 31 flights.

We got down to about the 11th floor and it just stopped completely. We were in stairway C at this point, and guys are like, come on, come on, let's go, let's go. Again, no panic. We found out later that the reason that that stairwell wasn't moving was because there was debris at the bottom, at the base of the stairs, because that stairwell was facing -- I don't know if you know the layout of the building, but from what I gather, that stairway was facing south.

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That was full of debris that came into the lobby, and stairway B was facing north. We were basically pretty close to the door leading to the 11th floor and a firefighter -- I don't know if it was a firefighter. It was dark and I didn't shine my light up at him or anything like that, but he just said, "Let's try these other stairs. I think they're clear." That's basically what he said to me.

So I turned to all the guys that were in the vicinity of me. A few of them were my guys, a few of them were Ladder 8. I don't know who else. But the guys that heard me switched over and the other guys passed the order on to everybody else that was in that general vicinity. As I found out later, the guys who didn't switch at that floor -- because, obviously, if you're below and you're evacuating, you're reluctant to come up and go out. So they switched over at either the 10th or the 9th.

I actually spoke with Captain -- it begins with a T -- from Engine 7, who did speak with Engine 33's officer, Pfeifer, who did make it out on the 9th floor, and he said, just talking between the two of us, you know, the sense of urgency, he didn't see it as much in him as that he had it himself. That was the

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whole thing. If you realized that you just had to get away from that building, it may have saved your life. I don't know. It depends on where you were in the building and everything else.

But there definitely were firefighters that we were picking up on the way down that had no knowledge, some that we gave them that knowledge that the order to evacuate was given, and they were like they didn't believe us. Guys were forcing doors and carrying roll-ups. We would say, "Listen, forget about that. Drop your roll-ups. You can get them later if you want. Just get out."

But like I said, I just felt like we had to get the hell out of there and all my guys were I knew on their way out. Like I said, if I knew that the other building went down, I probably would have made more -- it was difficult to stay together as a unit. There's no doubt about it. But if I had that knowledge, you know, I don't know. I don't know what would have changed. It would have been difficult to do, but would I have tried harder? I don't know. Because you just felt like, once you got on the lower floors, you were basically safe, you know, you had to get out.

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So we did move to that other stair and a lot of guys came with me. It was difficult to tell who. I know a couple of my guys came because I could see them, but then I saw the other guys were passing that order on and guys did switch over at the other floors because, like I said, I spoke with Engine 7. He switched over at the 9th floor. It was slow going in that stairwell also, stairwell B, but not as slow. So we made better time going down that stairwell.

Once I got to the lobby, I saw the debris, obviously from the other tower, but you still couldn't fathom -- it didn't register that that building had collapsed. I was thinking maybe there was a partial collapse maybe above the plane. But there was no one there that said, "Get your ass out of here. The other tower collapsed." It was just we got down there and we saw the debris and we just went, "What the fuck is going on here?" basically.

When I stepped out of the lobby onto West Street, the sidewalk leading to West Street, there was a Chief out there with a bullhorn. Again, I didn't know him personally. I don't remember who he was. I don't know if he's alive today. But he basically was yelling at everybody, "Head north." Obviously, the

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reason he was telling everybody to head north was because heading south you were going to come into a pile of shit. We didn't know that. The angle that we came out of, we were facing it. So I'm just looking around, but you really had to look around a bend to see the south tower anyway, whether it was there or not. You could see all the debris, obviously, but, again, it still didn't register that the whole thing went down at that point. But I knew it was definitely not just another plane.

So what we did was we were going to wait there for all our guys, but I knew that they were below me in the stair. Between that and the Chief saying -- you know, we were sort of like slowing down. He's like, "No." Basically, he was just telling us, "Get the hell out of here. Get away from this building." He didn't say this building is about to come down or anything like that, but you just saw he definitely had a sense of urgency about him. So I told my guys, "Listen, they were in front of us. Let's try to reach them on the radio. We'll hook up a couple of blocks away and we'll get everybody together and regroup and figure out what the hell is going on." At that point I'm thinking there's some sort of staging area or

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whatever around the block.

So we start making our way up West Street. I got about two blocks. Two of my firefighters were sitting on the median, just sitting there, dazed basically, tired, confused. I said, "Listen, guys." I didn't see a lot of other guys around yet. I didn't see a staging area or anything yet. So I said, "Let's keep moving." Again, I don't know what really made me think that being two blocks away wasn't safe. I have no idea to this day what made me realize that. But all the debris I saw, like I said, you just knew you had to get away from it.

So they did get up and keep moving, and about within the next ten or twenty seconds, the building came down. I guess we were out of the building somewhere around a minute. It came down and even then, you looked back, all you see -- you know how fast those buildings came down -- all you see is the dust and the debris and, again, it just doesn't click that these buildings can come down. I mean, I wasn't working in '93, but I was there the next day and I saw what happened, the damage, and you just couldn't believe that those buildings could come down. You just saw everything and it's like, oh, my God, what the hell

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happened? Did another plane hit? Did part of the building come down? What's going on?

But you knew you had to do something. I wrote in there that you had a few choices. You could either run into a building, dive behind a car, jump into a car, under a car, whatever. I still had my mask on my back. You could stop to put it on. That was another option you had. I said let me just run. I can run, I know I can run, that's what I'm going to do. One of the guys from my house was right near me. The other guys were slightly behind me. We were basically just running for our lives, not knowing what was going to happen in the next 20 seconds to a minute, whatever.

So I saw a clearing. I was in the middle of the street. I wasn't near a car or a building, so that definitely helped make my decision easier to run. I saw a clearing. I ran. I stayed straight. I didn't run into anything. The cloud caught me. It was pitch black. I kept running, obviously a little slow because you don't want to run into something, and I guess in about 20 to 30 seconds everything settled down, you started seeing some light, and I just kept moving. One of my guys that was right near me was still near me.

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The other two weren't. We talked to each other. I grabbed a guy from Engine 214, Toby, who lost all his guys I found out later, or most of them, and we started walking up trying to contact guys on the radio, 33, Ladder 9. There were a couple of guys from Ladder 9 on the radio. At this point now the radio was pretty open because there weren't a lot of survivors really. Guys ran in different directions. It had a lot to do with the choices you made, which direction you ran, what you decided to do, how close to the building you stayed, your sense of urgency, all of those things.

When we got out of there, there were ambulances lined up along West Street, West Side Highway, people throwing water at us, giving us water, giving us cell phones to talk to people, and I said, "Let's just keep heading north." There were five of us that got out of there, and I either visually or verbally spoke with them as I was going up West Street. A couple of guys needed minor medical assistance, eyes. Our eyes were fucked up, but we just had water splashed in them and they weren't too bad. I just told my guy that did need the medical assistance that was with me, and we kept the guy from 214 with us, "Let's try to find the staging area."



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So I'm trying to contact guys on the radio and, as you know probably from talking to guys or whatever, there wasn't any kind of staging area or anything at that point. It was just mass confusion. It was the guys coming in on the recall that were going to take control of the situation. I didn't realize that. Even at that point, I knew in my mind that firefighters were killed or injured in the last 45 minutes or whatever during what happened, but I still didn't realize the scope of it.

We got up four or five blocks at that point and I said, "All right. We can't get ahold of anybody on the radio." Except for the guys that I just mentioned from Ladder 9, nobody from 33, no Chiefs, I couldn't get anybody on the radio really. We may have started to get out of radio range as far as anybody right next to the World Trade Center. But seeing what just happened, we just knew we had to get away from there and try to regroup and figure out what the hell was going on. So I said, "Well, all right, we're not getting anybody on the radio. Let's go to the nearest firehouse."

Ladder 8 was the nearest firehouse. We went there. A couple of the guys from Ladder 8 that I

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mentioned that were in the vicinity of the building with us were there. They were missing their officer at that point. They were shaken up just like we were. I said, "Well, what's going on?" We were listening to the department radio. I was going to call the dispatcher, but I was already in house watch. So I said, "Well, let's turn on our TV and see what's going on here." That's where we got a lot of the information, the fact that the buildings completely came down. You really saw the carnage then because obviously they kept showing it over and over again at that point.

So, listening to the radio in quarters, I heard that there was a staging area up at Ladder 20. Again, thinking that there were a lot of survivors, we're all going to get up there, regroup and do what we've got to do, you know, find out that all my guys were up there, you know, everybody got out. But that's when I started to realize how many guys were injured seriously or hurt, actually more guys killed than injured, talking about the Chiefs that were missing, because guys were coming up there and, like myself, we were outside the building near Chiefs and reporting that those guys were missing or whatever.

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Basically, I just stayed there for a couple hours, a few hours, waiting for word of all my guys, and I sent one of my guys to the firehouse because I saw what Ladder 8 had done. They went to their firehouse after everything. I said, "Well, maybe they went up there. Get up there and see what's going on. I'll wait here." He called me from there and no word, and I just told him to stay there. I stayed at Ladder 20, Division 1 Quarters a few hours, and that's when we just got dribs and drabs of what was going on.

That was pretty much it. As the next couple of days went on, that's when you just realized the scope of it.

Q. So you lost track of the guys from your company on the way down? You had them all together?

A. Yes. Unfortunately, when the order to evacuate was given, when the other tower went down, I was in the process of gathering all my guys, because two of the guys who were a little heavy, they were not making it up the stairway as fast as we were. What was going through my mind was we're going to get up as high as we can get and we're probably going to come upon people who were burned, who were on the periphery of the crash, we're going to help them out. I didn't see

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anybody put the fire out. I mean, you could see it from the outside. It was eight floors, whatever the hell it was. That wasn't going to be put out any time soon. Maybe you were going to put out fires in certain areas where there's other people on the other side you can rescue. Who knows? You just really didn't know. So that's why I said on the 31st floor we had 33 with us. I spoke to their officer. I said, "All right, we'll work together. We'll go up the rest of the way together."

Unfortunately, like I said, when the other building went down, all hell broke loose. I was able to contact my guys on the radio, the two heavier-set guys. They did know that the order to evacuate was given. They also happened to be near a Chief and they started working their way down. Between them and the guys that were with me, I knew that all of us had gotten the word and we were all on our way out. So that much I knew. Between the fact that we were five floors apart, other firefighters were jumping in on stairwells as you were going down, we were strewn out. Ladder 9 and Engine 33, in the process of evacuating, got spread out. You may have been like this at first, and then more guys jumped in and you just became more

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and more spread out in the staircase. But, again, you just felt like you're going to get out of the building, you know, we'll regroup in the lobby. Once you got to the lobby and saw the damage, you knew you weren't going to stay there. At that point, then I said, "All right, we'll regroup a couple blocks away."

That didn't happen. For some of us it did, not for all of us. Like I said, I know 33 did have the knowledge to switch stairs. At some point they did switch stairs. They didn't do it as quickly as we did, obviously, or they hung around too close to the building, or they came upon someone that needed help and they helped them. You just have no way of knowing. That's what I tell the families. I tell the families that in all probability they came upon someone that maybe needed their help, firefighters, civilians, whatever, and they helped them. There's no way of knowing whether 30 seconds too long in that building was 30 seconds too long.

Q. Handy-talkies on channel 1; overloaded? How would you characterize traffic?

A. Very, very, very difficult to get a message to an individual. You were hearing messages on there. I was trying to monitor different things. A guy had

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asked me if I heard Captain Brown from Ladder 3 gave word of a partial collapse at some point. I heard somebody mention that to me, "Did you hear that?" I didn't hear that. But I did hear lots of messages on the way up, definitely clogged with a lot of guys in need of oxygen, CPR, firefighters down. I saw a lot of firemen on the way up. Civilians were giving us water. I just told my guys, "Listen, you don't want to be useless when you get up there. Don't run." You're not going to run up the stairs with 100 pounds of gear on your back.

Q. Pace yourselves.

A. Pace yourselves. We tried to the best we could. That's why I wasn't going to try to urge those heavier-set guys along too much. They would make their way up at their own pace. Like I said, at 31 we were trying to get them to catch up to us, and at that point I think I was just saying to myself, all right, from this point on, we're going to stay together.

Q. By the 31st floor, you knew that it was going to be really difficult. It must have been really going slow. I know how I am with the bunker gear. I can get about five floors and then I'm really hurting, with a mask, and these guys are carrying roll-ups. So you

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guys, by the 31st floor, you must have been dying.

A. Yes.

Q. And you knew you had another 40 or 50 to go if you were going to reach the fire, right?

A. Yes. You didn't know how long it was going to take you to get there. I don't know how long it took us to get where we did. I would guess, doing the math, we got there at 9:00 o'clock, probably got to the 31st floor at about somewhere between quarter to 10:00 and 10:00 o'clock, in that range. Because I guess the other building, the first building went down five to 10:00 or thereabouts, right?

Q. Let's look at the record. It's somewhere in that range. South tower collapses 9:55.

A. So that's pretty much what it took us, 55 minutes, probably 50 minutes to get 31 floors.

Q. It was a slow go.

A. Definitely a slow go. The guys, like I said, we even stopped on a couple of floors just to take a look and see what was going on and see if anybody needed our help, get water. Civilians were giving us water.

Q. The civilians that were giving you water while you were going up, these people were told to stay

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in place, you think, on the floors, or they had no sense to evacuate themselves, that there was a need to evacuate themselves, or what do you figure your their attitude was?

A. I think that you had probably -- they looked like, if I had to make a guess now, I never really thought about it, but now that you mention it, they looked like probably fire warden kind of people who maybe they should be the last ones to leave that floor, like make sure everyone else is out of there. Because I didn't see too many people on each floor. I might have stopped on two floors on the way up. They definitely looked like responsible-type people who were making sure that their floor was evacuated.

Q. When you got down to the first floor, did you go through the lobby to exit or did you exit like directly to the street?

A. No. We went through the lobby.

Q. Who did you see in the lobby? What were the conditions in the lobby as far as the command post?

A. I remember seeing the lobby command post still standing. No one was manning it. The Chief I saw on the way out -- I didn't really see anybody milling about. I think once everybody got down to that



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level and saw the damage, they just realized it was a good idea to get the hell out of there. That Chief was still there at that point. I don't know how long he stayed, but he was there when I came by.

That's pretty much it, unless you have any more questions.

Q. When you went through the lobby, had the windows been blown out in the north tower? You were exiting the north tower lobby. Was the lobby full of debris? Was it full of the dust from the south tower having collapsed?

A. Yes.

Q. Could you see your way out? Were things that bad or --

A. If I had to guess, it's hard to say. You could see your way out. There wasn't still a lot of dust or anything in the air. It was just a lot of debris strewn about. The fact that we walked to where the doors were would lead me to believe, thinking now, that the windows were mostly intact because we went around them. As you came out of the stairwell, you had this little lobby and then you'd come out and the windows were here and the doorway was over here. So the quickest way out, if the windows weren't there, we

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would have walked straight through those. But we went over to the doorway, so that would lead me to believe that most of them were still probably not fully intact but at least to the degree where you couldn't go through them.

Q. Who did you see outside when you were going north on West Street? Did you see the command post? Did you see Ganci, Feehan, the chaplain?

A. No, I did not. No. The only one I saw was that Chief, and most of the firefighters I saw were listening to that Chief and heading north. I know some firefighters also headed west, because at that point I was making the decision should we go north, should we head towards the water, where would be the best place to go, and I just made the decision to go north.

Again, I don't know who that Chief was. I didn't recognize him personally. But him and that Chief on the floor with me and then whoever tapped me on the shoulder and told me to switch stairs, they had a lot to do with the fact that I'm sitting here talking to you, especially the guy that told me to switch stairs because, as it turned out, the guys who switched stairs at that level that he was at, a lot of them survived, as far as I can tell, and the guys who

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switched below, it could have just been the time it took them to get from where they were below the 11th floor to the 10th floor and then switched over and were slightly behind us. I know guys who were like 30 seconds out of the building, Engine 7 being one of them. I can't remember who else. I can't remember if it was Engine 4 or somebody else down there who said that they were out of the building about 30 seconds and some of their guys survived because they ran this way and other guys ran another way.

I remember passing guys. I saw a guy's name on the list who was by his rig that was parked pretty close to the building, and I remember patting him on the butt because I knew him personally and said, "Come on. You'd better keep moving." I saw his name on the list as one of the firefighters. Definitely, the sense of urgency was a huge factor in your ability to get out of there. I don't know what you could attest that to. Experience? Knowledge of the fact that the other building went down; did you have that knowledge? I don't think a lot of guys did. A lot of guys I spoke with did not.

Some guys took the time to look out the windows to see what was going on. The fact that I got

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the reports from the FBI guy that there were more planes in the air unaccounted for, I told my guys to stay away from the windows because, obviously, that's not the place you want to be. At that point, the two planes that I did know of hit on an upper floor, so once you got into the lower floors, the thing that's going through my mind is planes are hitting this building higher up. So once you got down to where we were, you just felt that you were --

Q. Probably safer.

A. -- relatively safe. The one thing that goes through my mind all the time is would things have been different if we knew the other tower went down? That's something, again, it's purely hindsight, but it's definitely something that goes through my mind, would that have changed things?

Q. Okay. That's an interesting point.

A. Would it have induced panic? It's really hard to say.

Q. That's an interesting point. Panic may be good because it's fright to flight syndrome.

A. Yes. Another point, too, is that there weren't a lot of civilians left at this point. I'd say, of the people I saw evacuating the building, 95

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percent of them were firefighters at that point. They were out. Civilians were out. All the civilian casualties from what I can piece together were either people that hung around too close to the buildings or were in the south tower and they basically had no chance, because I know I've heard and I'm sure you've heard that they got the order to stay in place, and if they did, they died, and if they just disregarded that and had time to get out, they got out. But the people in our building, without a doubt, they must have gotten the order to evacuate because the stairwell was full of civilians. They were all orderly getting out because the stairwells weren't full of anything. Obviously, the lower floors were clear.

Q. Were the lights on in the staircases?

A. Lights were on.

Q. Were there any communications going on like building announcements or anything like that, any kind of supervisory announcements encouraging people which way to go or just to get out? Were there any loudspeaker announcements or was it just word of mouth that you recall?

A. I don't recall any. They could have been there in the background. I was trying to concentrate

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on our radio as far as what kind of information I could piece together from there because, like I said, when we were in the lobby, you go up as an officer and you don't get an order to do something and both the towers just got hit by planes, obviously, I'm just thinking about -- at this point you're almost in a defensive mode, not quite, because you still want to get up there.

But like I found out from guys who saw it on TV, right away people on TV were speculating or themselves speculating these buildings have been attacked. This isn't an accident. So, if you're responding from midtown, you're already in a defensive mode. We didn't get into that mode really until we went to evacuate the building. So we were just doing what we always do.

The other part that's hindsight, too, something that I think about, and as a Chief you know that at regular fires you have that 20-minute rule. If this fire is out of control for 20 minutes, I've got to start thinking about getting my guys out of there because now, if the building collapses, it's going to become more of a factor than anything else.

Obviously, I think there was a little bit of

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Titanic mentality because of 1993. Everybody saw the damage that was done and that building didn't go down. I don't know. You hear reports there were engineers down there that said, "No, these buildings won't go down." Then you hear interviews of good engineers on TV that weren't at the scene but who were watching it on TV and said, "No, these buildings are going down. I knew these buildings were going to go down."

So, obviously, I had no prior knowledge that these buildings would go down. No one did. I haven't seen an interview with Chief Dunne yet, I don't know if you have, as far as what he knew. That would be interesting to know --

Q. I haven't seen it.

A. -- what thoughts were going through his head when he was watching it on TV, because I don't think there's probably anybody more qualified than he is as far as fires go. But I didn't hear things like jet fuel burns at 2,000 degrees, I-beams melt at 1,500 degrees. It's hard to say.

That's the thing that I think about as far as the Chiefs go. Listen. Everybody did the best they could, and I'm not blaming anyone because I didn't think those buildings would go down. But you say to

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yourself, God, I wish we just had that knowledge.

Q. But I don't know how they could calculate that. We know what things burn at and we know what things fail at but, number one, the life hazard comes into play, we're trying to save life, and the second thing is to what degree is the steel being affected, by how much? It's incalculable. You can't stand in the street with a calculator and know that. We can only guess at those things. Again, there's no history of these buildings falling down.

A. Hey, listen. I'm not blaming anybody. I know. But these are the things that go on in your head after the fact.

Q. Sure.

A. You just can't help it, just trying to figure out what the hell happened. That's the same thing that you were saying. The families of the victims, they want to know what the hell happened, that's all. They want to know where their son or father was when this happened, you know, why didn't he get out? They want to hear things like maybe he was trying to help someone. That would go a long way towards them living the rest of their lives.

Q. Sure.



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A. It's important to us, too. I would love to know that Engine 33, hear from somebody, "Oh, they were helping somebody on the 3rd floor and that's why they didn't get out." Because I know they knew as well as I did that we had to get out of that building.

Q. Sure.

A. But they didn't make it. Did they not switch over quick enough? Because like I said, all it took was -- 45 seconds goes like that. It seems like an eternity sometimes, but in a situation like that, it's gone. If you were 15 seconds away from that building, you weren't living. Really. The odds were not good. We were a minute away, thank God, and the dust and debris weren't going to kill you. Things were pulverized so much that, the way that building came down, unless you were really close to it, you were going to get hit with dust and debris, which, like I said, wasn't going to kill you. It was going to scare the shit out of you, but that's about it.

That's why I think there was just so much death as compared to injury because, like I said, if you were two blocks away, three blocks, that was probably enough for you to just get hit with that shit, but you were going to live and you really only had

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minor injuries. If you were too close, they're never going to find any piece of you. Then you hear about Ladder 6 and Engine 39 being in the building when it collapsed and you just find that unbelievable.

Q. How did they get out? I know Ladder 6 made it out, right? They were the ones that were helping that woman?

A. Ladder 6 and Engine 39. I used to work in Ladder 16, so I talked to those guys personally about it. They were in the stairwell somewhere between 2 and 4 when it went down. If you were on the first floor, you were crushed, but if you just happened to be where they were, because of the way the I-beams fell or for whatever reason, and they were all rescued within three to four hours. But they didn't get out on their own. You hear stories of guys who got out of debris on their own, lifted an I-beam off of themselves or whatever it might be, and other guys who were saved by other guys in the vicinity. I'm sure those were guys that were probably a block away or something like that who were hit with larger pieces than we were.

But like I said, the counseling unit was here before. It was good. We got a lot of information that we didn't have. Every time they come, we get a little



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Q. Okay. Is there anybody else that you saw on the way out or on the way in that you can remember that we didn't talk about so far? Does anybody come to mind that you saw in the lobby or staircase? You mentioned 33 Engine. You mentioned --

A. Yes. Some of the companies I remember seeing were Engine 5. I know one of the guys was getting oxygen on one of the floors on the way up. Who did I see? Ladder 8.

Q. Also on the way up, that's where you saw him, in the stair on the way up?

A. Yes. Basically, I didn't see a lot of guys, and I'll tell you why, because the guys who were near me were my company and then some of the guys I just mentioned, and you're working your way up and you're just in that line of firefighters. So there could be a guy a flight ahead of you that you didn't see. On the way up, I only stopped at a couple of floors briefly. So, like I said, if you didn't know the guy personally, you really didn't remember him.

When I got to the 31st floor, that's when I started seeing guys. I saw Ladder 8 then. Engine 5 was in the vicinity I know, Engine 33. I saw the Chief who I didn't know. After the building shook, the

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lights went out. So on the way down, you couldn't see anything unless you shined your light in their face. So it was difficult. It seems like an eternity that we were in there, but basically we got in there at five after 9:00 and we were out of there at 10:30. But you didn't interact with a lot of firefighters because we're all spread out through 60 floors. It's just a matter of when you were assigned to where you were assigned, and since we were assigned to go up the stairwell, you could only see five firefighters at a time, basically. So we didn't really come across a lot of guys. On the way down, I didn't stop at any floors, just crossing over at 11. That's pretty much it, I guess.

CHIEF MALKIN: This concludes the interview. The time is now 1612 hours and I thank the Lieutenant for providing us with this information.